STAKEHOLDER ANNOUNCEMENT

USDA Extends Deadlines for ReConnect Rural Broadband Program

WASHINGTON, Feb. 26, 2019 – USDA Rural Utilities Service Acting Administrator Bette Brand today announced that USDA has extended application deadlines for the Rural eConnectivity Pilot Program (ReConnect Program).

USDA is pushing back the first application deadline to May 31, 2019, to give potential applicants adequate time to access technical assistance from USDA staff and its partners.

The new application deadlines are:

- May 31 for grants;

- June 21 for 50/50 loan/grant combinations; and

- July 12 for low-interest loans.

Applicants can request technical assistance from USDA by filling out the contact form at https://www.usda.gov/reconnect/contact-us.

USDA will announce in March the date when applications will start being accepted through https://reconnect.usda.gov. See page 5981 of the February 25 Federal Register for additional information.

In March 2018, Congress provided $600 million to USDA to expand broadband infrastructure and services in rural America. On December 13, Agriculture Secretary Sonny Perdue announced the rules of the program, called "ReConnect", including how the loans and grants will be awarded to help build broadband infrastructure in rural America.

Telecommunications companies, rural electric cooperatives and utilities, internet service providers and municipalities may apply for funding through USDA's ReConnect Program to connect rural areas that currently have insufficient broadband service. Through the ReConnect Program, USDA is making available approximately $200 million for grants, as well as $200 million for loan and grant combinations, and $200 million for low-interest loans. Funds will be awarded to projects that have financially sustainable business models that will bring high-speed broadband to rural homes, businesses, farms, ranches and community facilities such as first responders, health care sites and schools.

More information about the ReConnect program may be found at https://reconnect.usda.gov.

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